

The Ohio State University
Department of Animal Sciences
Student Safety Guidelines for Handling of Animals in Departmental Courses

The following guidelines have been developed to help advise and protect students from physical and zoonotic disease risks when handling animals, as well as protect Departmental Animal Units from disease introduction into the herds.

1. **Biosecurity Statement:** Visitors travelling outside of the United States in countries that are free of Foot and Mouth Disease must not have contact with University-owned animals within **5 days** of their return to the United States. Visitors travelling outside the United States to countries where Foot and Mouth Disease is reported or endemic must not have contact with University-owned animals within **10 days** of their return to the United States.

a. Swine Health Statement: Students visiting an OSU Swine Center must not have contact with a non-OSU swine facility or pigs prior to entering an OSU swine facility on any given day; thereby, imposing a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hours of non-pig contact prior to entry into an OSU swine facility. Clothing and footwear worn at non-OSU swine facilities must not be worn at an OSU Swine Center.

b. Poultry Health Statement: Students visiting the Columbus Poultry farm must have at least a 24 hour period between contact with poultry outside of the farm and entering the facility. Clothing and footwear worn at outside poultry facilities must not be worn at Columbus Poultry.

2. **Clothing and Personal Protective Equipment:** Students are to wear clean, laundered outerwear, and clean closed-toed shoes. Sandals flip-flops and high-heeled shoes are unacceptable. Leather or rubber boots are preferred footwear. **Clothing should be worn to match outside weather conditions, which often can be wet and/or cold.** Protective plastic boot covers, rubber gloves, hair nets, and disposable suits may be required for wear depending on the species and location of animals used. These items will be provided by instructors as deemed necessary.

3. **Food and Drink:** The bringing of food and drink onto University animal housing areas is prohibited, as is eating and drinking while handling animals. Hand and arm washing after interaction with animals is highly encouraged. Access to sinks/basins to clean hands will be provided. The changing of clothing and showering after using animals in class is also highly encouraged.

4. **Physical Safety Risks:** The handling of cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine and poultry carries inherent physical risks. Risk of getting kicked, bitten, scratched, knocked down, stepped on, etc. is present at any time these species are being handled; therefore so it is very important to observe instructors directions and cautions when interacting with these animals. Please observe flight zones of specific species, avoid rapid movements that can be threatening to animals, and move calmly and deliberately. Avoid loud noises that can startle animals, and have an escape route planned when working in close confinement with large animals. Make sure animals are aware of your presence when you approach them.

Exercise care when using equipment around large animals. Be aware of cattle chutes that can pinch and crush, as well as unsecured, hinged gates and fencing that can fall or be kicked into you. Do not wrap halters or lead ropes around your hands when leading cattle, horses or small ruminants, as this can cause severe injury if the animal runs away or is spooked. Take caution when moving swine with sort boards, especially large sows and boars as they can manipulate boards with their nose and knock the board into your body and head. When using hypodermic needles to administer vaccines, medications or draw blood samples, pay attention to instructor

directions, and ***do not recap needles, except with pliers or the one-handed scoop method.*** Dispose of used needles and syringes in designated sharps containers.

All student injuries should be reported to the instructor immediately! Treatment of injuries incurred during animal courses should occur through a student's primary care physician or through The Ohio State University Student Health Services.

5. Zoonotic Disease Risks: Diseases that transfer from animals to people are called zoonoses. Animals can carry bacteria, viruses and parasites that cause illness in people, even if the animal is showing no signs of disease. This is why students should exercise caution when handling animals and take the necessary steps to minimize the risk of illness. Food should not be brought into or consumed in animal facilities. Gloves should be worn, and hands and arms washed thoroughly after animal contact and before eating.

One of most important diseases to be aware of is Q-fever. Q-fever arises from infected sheep, cattle, goats, rodents, and their ticks. Q-fever is caused by the rickettsial agent *Coxiella burnetii*. Onset of Q-fever is usually abrupt 2 to 3 weeks following exposure with symptoms of headache, shivering, weakness, severe sweating, dry cough, joint and muscle pains, loss of appetite, vomiting, shortness of breath, nose bleeds and sometimes intolerance of light. Antibiotic treatment is required. The greatest risk for Q-fever infection is the handling of pregnant sheep or goats or their placentae after they have aborted. The wearing of gloves when handling sheep and goats is strongly recommended. If you develop these symptoms, especially after handling sheep or goats, please consult your physician.

Many of the important zoonotic pathogens are found in animal feces. These include Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. Coli and Cryptosporidium. Exposure to manure is the most common way of contracting illness from these pathogens, that is why care should be taken when handling species that carry these pathogens. Fever, malaise, muscle aches and diarrhea are the most common symptoms in humans. Wearing gloves, being careful not to touch your face or mouth, and washing your hands and arms thoroughly after manure exposure helps cut the risk of infection. A complete change in clothing and showering are strongly recommended after exposure to manure during class.

“Orf” (or Contagious ecthyma, sore mouth) of sheep and goats is another zoonotic disease that students should be aware of that can be transmitted via contact with infected animals. The virus causes lesions on the lips and mouth of affected sheep and goats. The disease can be transmitted to humans, and most commonly causes scabs and nodules on the hands, which resolve after 3 to 6 weeks. Wearing of gloves, and avoiding handling of actively infected sheep, helps prevent infection.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact your instructor or the Chair of the Departmental Safety Committee, Dr. Justin Kieffer (kieffer.22@osu.edu)